

insights



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REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA COUNTRY STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME EVALUATION

A partnership for Farmer Field Schools in Angola

In the Republic of Angola, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been the champion for poor small-scale producers since it started its operations in the country in 1989. In 2008, IFAD partnered with the World Bank first, and with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) subsequently, to improve the livelihoods of thousands of poor small-scale farming households in the Central Plateau.

The framework of intervention

In 2002, Angola finally achieved a lasting peace agreement that put an end to a civil war that had erupted soon after the country had reached independence from Portugal in 1975. After almost 30 years of conflict, infrastructure was destroyed, and institutions were crippled. The last decade of war had been particularly devastating because major cities and urban areas, where most people and important economic infrastructures were located, had also been under attack.

In 2005, IFAD's Executive Board approved the first Country Strategy and Opportunities Paper (COSOP) in Angola. Planned for six years, the COSOP responded to urgent issues for the country, which was struggling with

major food insecurity and poverty challenges and the need to rehabilitate and develop virtually everything in the rural areas, from infrastructures to organizations and services, as well as capacities across all levels.

The partnership for MOSAP I

In 2006, IFAD and the World Bank realized that both were in the process of designing a project aimed at improving agricultural production and productivity in the Central Highlands, a region considered to have high potential for agriculture and where population pressure was heavier than in other regions of the country. The obvious decision to join forces followed, with the World Bank as implementing agency and IFAD in the position of junior partner in financial terms. Japan also contributed financial resources to the

initiative, which was named Market-Oriented Smallholder Agriculture Project (MOSAP).

The Country Project Management Team at the time included a resident Project Facilitator, who actively contributed to formulating the project. In doing so, IFAD strongly advocated with the Government and the World Bank to focus the project on the rural poor and frame it as a poverty alleviation initiative by supporting improvement of crop production and productivity among poor small-scale farming households.

IFAD was recognized by the World Bank as having provided crucial strategic inputs to the project design, as well as key technical and management support during its implementation.

The Farmer Field Schools

After a slow inception phase and some delays that led to the decision to revise targets and reduce the budget, MOSAP engaged with FAO as Service Provider to integrate the Farmer Field School (FFS) methodology as the main approach to support small-scale farming households.

The FFS approach focuses on “learning by doing” and is based on the principle that farmers take the lead in the experimenting and learning process. In an FFS, participants and facilitator compare traditional farmers’ techniques and improved techniques against parameters initially identified as important for farmers, to assess which techniques or combination thereof are most effective in that particular context.

Membership in the MOSAP I FFS offered an opportunity to learn improved farming practices, discuss community issues and develop social capital. Being a member of a respected group in the community was by itself a first step towards empowerment, particularly for women members. Some farmers were also trained to become Master trainers, or Master facilitators; both are key roles in the FFS extension approach as they

open up opportunities for employment, in addition to strengthening the incumbents’ profiles in their community. Furthermore, in the FFS that benefitted from functional literacy courses, all participants went through a significant individual empowerment process that led to stronger ties among members.

A total of 88 government extension officers attended trainings on improved production techniques, FFS methodology, and management, which led to better-quality support and technical assistance that farmers received through the project. The FFS approach enabled a solid relationship between the extension system and farmers’ groups to be established, to the point that extension officers stated that their role had gradually changed from teaching to facilitation.

As a result of MOSAP’s success with FFS, the Ministry of Agriculture adopted the approach as the official agriculture extension methodology in the country, and several projects are replicating the approach.

Two main weaknesses in the focus of project implementation undermined the effectiveness of the FFS approach: although the majority of FFS members were women, the project did not support them to take on leadership roles in the groups; and the FFS curriculum did not include issues related to natural resources management and adaptation to climate change.

Lessons learned

The results achieved by MOSAP I through the FFS methodology were also largely due to the rigor in applying the methodology, which adopted the three-cycles approach to graduation envisaged in the original design of the FFS. This is undoubtedly costly, but MOSAP I showed once again that sustainable benefits in terms of individual and organizational capacity development and empowerment can only be achieved through a long-term engagement with participants.

The partnership among FAO, IFAD and the World Bank for MOSAP I was a successful example of the complementarity between the three organizations, wherein each has been operating according to its mandate and comparative advantage for a common strategic goal.

MOSAP IN FIGURES

Total amount at approval in December 2007: US\$ 49.5 million.

World Bank contribution: US\$ 30 million loan;

IFAD contribution: US\$ 8.2 million loan

Government of Japan contribution: US\$ 4.02 million grant

Government of Angola contribution: US\$ 4.12 million

Total cost at completion in September 2016: US\$ 37.4 million, of which US\$ 7.1 million from IFAD and US\$ 20 million from the World Bank

Number of smallholder farmers who benefitted from training: approximately 55,000, of whom approximately 22,500 through 726 FFS

Women participants: 56 per cent of FFS members and 43 per cent of farmers using improved farming practices

Crop Production Index: 66 per cent increase in 2015, over the baseline in 2011/12 across four crops: maize, cassava, beans and potato

For further information:

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